United Nations CRC/C/COG/CO/2-4

Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Concluding observations on the combined second to fourth periodic report of the Congo*

1. The Committee considered the combined second to fourth periodic report of the Congo (CRC/C/COG/2-4) at its 1847th and 1848th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.1847 and 1848), held on 13 and 14 January 2014, and adopted, at its 1875th meeting, held on 31 January 2014, the following concluding observations.

I. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined second to fourth periodic report of the State party (CRC/C/COG/2-4) and the written replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/COG/Q/2-4/Add.1), which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the constructive dialogue with the high-level and multisectoral delegation of the State party.

II. Follow-up measures taken and progress achieved by the State party

3. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the following legislative measures:

(a) Law No. 10-2012 instituting the regime for families and children facing difficulties (4 July 2012);

(b) Law No. 30-2011 on persons living with HIV (3 June 2011);

(c) Law No. 5-2011 on the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples (25 February 2011);

(d) Law No. 4-2010 on the protection of the child and containing the Child Protection Code (14 June 2010).

4. The Committee also notes with appreciation the State's accession to:

(a) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (24 September 2010);

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-fifth session (13–31 January 2014).

(b) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (24 October 2009).

5. The Committee welcomes the information from the delegation of the State party on the future ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

6. The Committee also welcomes the following institutional and policy measures that have an impact on children:

(a) The National Development Plan 2012–2016;

(b) The National Policy for Social Action 2013–2016;

(c) The Congo-Benin agreement to protect children from human trafficking.

7. The Committee notes as positive that the State party extended, in 2010, its first invitation to a United Nations special procedure.

III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6), of the Convention)

The Committee's previous recommendations

8. While welcoming the State party's efforts to follow up the Committee's concluding observations of 2006 on the initial report (CRC/C/COG/CO/1), the Committee regrets that several concerns and recommendations have been insufficiently or only partly addressed, including those relating to coordination; birth registration; torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; and harmful practices.

9. **The Committee urges the State party to take all the necessary measures to address the recommendations in the previous concluding observations that have not been fully implemented and to provide adequate follow-up to the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations.**

Legislation

10. The Committee takes note of the efforts by the State party to review its legal framework on the rights of the child with the aim of bringing national legislation into line with the Convention, and also takes note, in particular, of Law No. 4-2010 on the protection of the child. However, it notes with concern that the Convention has still not been fully domesticated in national legislation and that the draft law on the modernization of the justice system has not yet been adopted. The Committee also notes with concern the lack of information on whether the Convention could be or has been enforced directly in national courts.

11. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue to harmonize its legislation with the principles and provisions of the Convention, incorporate the Convention into domestic legislation and expedite the adoption of the draft law on the modernization of the justice system and its implementation. The Committee also recommends that the State party ensure that the Convention can be invoked as a legal basis by individuals and judges at all levels of administrative and judicial proceedings.**

Coordination

12. While noting the coordination by the relevant interministerial committee of activities to implement the Convention, the Committee is concerned that the State party lacks permanent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The Committee reiterates its concern at the absence of a permanent body mandated to coordinate the implementation and enforcement of all laws, policies, programmes and measures for children.

13. **The Committee recalls its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 9) and urges the State party to designate a main coordination body for children and to allocate adequate human, financial and technical resources for its effective functioning.**

Comprehensive policy and strategy

14. The Committee takes note of the adoption of several national plans of action having an impact on children, but is concerned at the lack of data on the results achieved under those plans and the absence of a comprehensive policy and strategy on children.

15. **The Committee recalls that the State party has the lead responsibility with respect to adopting a comprehensive policy on children and encourages it to take action in that regard. The Committee recommends that the State party also develop a strategy with the necessary elements for its application, on the basis of the policy, and provide it with sufficient human, technical and financial resources. The Committee also recommends that the necessary monitoring and evaluation mechanisms be put in place to regularly assess progress achieved and identify possible deficiencies for corrective action. It urges the State party to take the steps necessary to ensure the effective participation of children in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.**

Allocation of resources

16. The Committee notes with concern that, despite earnings from the country's oil sector, the State party's social indicators have not improved and investment in the social sectors continues to be insufficient for all children to fully exercise their rights. While noting the increased spending earmarked by the Ministry of Social Affairs for children belonging to vulnerable groups, the Committee is concerned that the measure is benefiting only children from the capital. The Committee also notes that corruption remains pervasive, despite efforts by the State party to eliminate it, and expresses its concern about the lack of information on budgetary monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

17. **In the light of its day of general discussion in 2007 on "Resources for the rights of the child — responsibility of States" and with emphasis on articles 2, 3, 4 and 6 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Substantially increase its budget allocations to adequate levels in the areas of social spending for children and their families;

(b) Establish a budgeting process that includes a child-rights perspective and sets out clear allocations for children in the relevant sectors and agencies, including specific indicators and a tracking, monitoring and evaluation system for the allocations and their use;

(c) Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the adequacy, efficacy and equitability of the distribution of resources allocated for the implementation of the Convention;

(d) Strengthen measures to combat corruption and strengthen institutional capacities to detect, investigate and prosecute corruption effectively.

Data collection

18. The Committee welcomes the State's efforts to improve the availability of data, including through the Health Demographic Survey 2011, the Survey on Congolese Households and the data collection system available for the education sector. Despite noting information on the creation of a national system of information on social action and an observatory for children and society, the Committee regrets the absence of a comprehensive system for data collection in the State party. The Committee notes with concern that reliable, disaggregated data on important areas of the Convention are not available and that there is insufficient coordination and collaboration among government agencies regarding data collection.

19. **In the light of its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee recalls its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 17) and strongly recommends that the State party expeditiously improve its data collection system. The data should cover all areas of the Convention and should be disaggregated by age, sex, geographic location, ethnic and national origin and socioeconomic background in order to facilitate analysis of the situation of all children, particularly those in situations of vulnerability. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the data and indicators be shared among the ministries concerned and used for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects for the effective implementation of the Convention. In this context, the Committee also recommends that the State party continue its technical cooperation with, among others, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and regional mechanisms.**

Independent monitoring

20. The Committee notes that the State party envisages broadening the mandate of the National Human Rights Commission, in accordance with the Committee's previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 13). Nevertheless, it notes with concern that no action has been taken in this regard and takes note, with regret, of information from the State party on the lack of operational capacity of both the National Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman to monitor the implementation of the Convention or to receive individual complaints from children.

21. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/COG/CO/1, para. 13). Taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, the Committee urges the State party to establish, either within or outside the National Human Rights Commission, a specific mechanism for monitoring children's rights, with the capacity to: receive, investigate and address complaints by children in a child-sensitive manner; ensure the privacy and protection of victims; and undertake monitoring, follow-up and verification activities for victims. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the independence of such a monitoring mechanism, including with regard to its funding, mandate and immunities, in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). The Committee also recalls its recommendation that the State party seek technical cooperation from, among others, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNICEF.**

Dissemination and awareness-raising

22. The Committee takes note of the various efforts made by the State party to disseminate information and provide training on the Convention. However, it notes with concern that the principles and provisions of the Convention are not disseminated systematically at all levels of society, notably in rural areas and among children. It also notes with concern that training on the Convention is not permanent and remains insufficient.

23. **The Committee encourages the State party to continue to carry out awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns to disseminate the text of the Convention, and to incorporate human rights education into the curricula of both primary and secondary schools. It also recommends that the State party continue its efforts to provide adequate and systematic training and/or sensitization on children's rights to professional groups working with and for children, such as judges, lawyers, law enforcement officials, civil servants, local government officials, teachers, social workers, and health personnel and, especially, children themselves.**

Cooperation with civil society

24. The Committee notes with appreciation the contribution of civil society organizations to the implementation of activities related to the rights of the child. While welcoming the overall provision of services for children by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Committee is concerned that the State party appears to delegate the provision of services to NGOs as contractors or in its place. The Committee also expresses its concern that, even though they serve the public interest, many civil society organizations face challenges, as they are not recognized as State-approved organizations.

25. **The Committee calls on the State party to systematically involve communities and civil society actors, including non-governmental and children's organizations, in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, plans and programmes related to children's rights. It also recommends that the State party remove any obstacles to State recognition of those NGOs that serve the rights of the child and the public interest.**

Children's rights and the business sector

26. The Committee notes with satisfaction the information provided by the State party's delegation relating to the existence of oil extraction and forest concession contract clauses that provide for the adoption of measures to protect the rights to health and education of children living in the areas of industrial activity. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that it is not mandatory under national law to carry out environmental and social impact assessments prior to the approval of investment projects likely to have an impact on children's rights, particularly as a consequence of forced displacement and expropriation, pollution and damages to cultural assets and traditions.

27. **Drawing the State party's attention to its general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party establish and implement regulations to ensure that the business sector complies with international and national human rights, labour, environmental and other standards, particularly with regard to children's rights and in the light of Human Rights Council resolutions 8/7 (para. 4 (d)) and 17/4 (para. 6 (f)). In particular, it recommends that the State party:**

(a) Establish a clear regulatory framework for the industries operating in the State party to ensure that their activities do not negatively affect human rights or

endanger environmental and other standards, especially those relating to children's and women's rights;

(b) Ensure the effective implementation by companies, especially industrial companies, of international and national environmental and health standards; ensure the effective monitoring of implementation of those standards and appropriately impose sanctions and provide remedies when violations occur; and ensure that appropriate international certification is sought;

(c) Consider the possibility of including in the regulatory framework the obligation to carry out environmental and social impact assessments prior to the approval of investment projects, in particular with regard to a project's impact on the rights of the child;

(d) Carry out prior consultations with populations, including children, whose rights are likely to be affected by investment projects, especially in cases of relocation and/or damages to cultural assets and traditions;

(e) Require companies to undertake full public disclosure of the environmental, health-related and human rights impacts of their business activities, and their plans to address such impacts;

(f) Be guided by the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework, endorsed by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 17/4, in implementing these recommendations.

B. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the Convention)

Non-discrimination

28. The Committee welcomes measures taken by the State party to strengthen national legislation guaranteeing the principle of non-discrimination, including the law on the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned by the slow implementation of such legislation and regrets that the Constitution has yet to be amended to prohibit discrimination on any grounds covered by the Convention (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 27 (a)). The Committee expresses its strong concern about the lack of systematic efforts to combat and change discriminatory attitudes and practices, and is particularly concerned about:

(a) The widespread ethnic-based discrimination against children belonging to indigenous groups, who are often the target of insults, physical violence and bullying;

(b) Discrimination against children living in isolated, rural areas in the enjoyment of their rights, in particular regarding access to health services, food, water, schooling and birth registration;

(c) Discrimination against children in street situations and refugee children, in particular those from Rwanda;

(d) Multiple forms of discrimination and prejudice against children with albinism;

(e) The multiple gender-based discrimination against girls.

29. **Recalling its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 27), the Committee recommends that the principle of non-discrimination, as provided for under article 2 of the Convention, be fully and vigorously applied by the State party and integrated into the implementation of all other articles to guarantee, without discrimination, the rights set out in the Convention. The Committee also recommends**

that the State party make systematic, adequate and effective efforts to address persistent discrimination in the family, in schools and in other settings, in particular concerning indigenous children, children from rural areas, children with albinism, children in street situations and refugee children, especially girls. It further recommends that the State party include in its next periodic report information on measures and programmes relevant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child undertaken by the State party in follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, as well as the outcome document adopted at the 2009 Durban Review Conference.

Best interests of the child

30. The Committee is concerned about the lack of information on the State party's efforts to ensure the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken into account as a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, and to apply that right in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings, as well as in policies and programmes relating to children.

31. **The Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, and recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to ensure that this right is appropriately integrated and consistently applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings as well as in all policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to and have an impact on children. In that regard, the State party is encouraged to develop procedures and criteria to provide guidance to all relevant persons in authority for determining the best interests of the child in every area and for giving those interests due weight as a primary consideration. Such procedures and criteria should be disseminated to the public, including traditional leaders, public and private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities and legislative bodies.**

Respect for the views of the child

32. The Committee recalls its concern that the general principle of respect for the views of the child is not fully respected and applied (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 30). It notes with concern the lack of progress in adopting the law on the inclusion of the Parliament of the Congolese Child in the parliamentary process.

33. **The Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, and recommends that the State take measures to strengthen respect for the views of the child in accordance with article 12 of the Convention. To that effect, the Committee recalls its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 31), and urges the State party to:**

(a) Ensure the implementation of the right of the child to have his or her views taken into account. In that connection, particular emphasis should be placed on the right of every child to express his or her views freely in the family, at school, within other institutions and bodies, and in the community and society at large, with special attention being paid to vulnerable and minority groups. This should also be reflected in all laws and judicial and administrative decisions;

(b) Take measures to ensure the effective implementation of legislation recognizing the right of the child to be heard in relevant legal proceedings;

(c) Conduct research to identify the issues that are most important to children, to hear their views on those issues, to find out how well their voices are

heard in family decisions-making affecting their lives and identify the channels through which they currently and potentially have the most influence on national and local decision-making;

(d) Conduct programmes and awareness-raising activities to promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family, the community and schools, including within student council bodies, paying particular attention to girls and children in vulnerable situations;

(e) Institutionalize the sessions of the Parliament of the Congolese Child as a regular event and ensure that it is provided with a meaningful mandate and adequate human, technical and financial resources, in order to facilitate children's effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them.

Right to life and survival

34. While taking note of the measures adopted by the State party for the protection of children with albinism, the Committee remains seriously concerned that children with albinism are still often exposed to life-threatening situations.

35. **The Committee recommends that the State party develop and implement awareness-raising campaigns against superstitious beliefs concerning children (and adults) with albinism, and investigate, prosecute and, where appropriate, punish perpetrators of acts of homicide targeting children with albinism.**

C. Civil rights and freedoms (arts.7, 8, and 13–17, of the Convention)

Birth registration

36. The Committee notes with appreciation the birth registration strategic plan for the period 2009–2013 and the abolishment of fees for late birth registration as mentioned by the State party delegation during the dialogue. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned about the large number of children that are still not registered, the existence of unofficial payments attached to late birth registration, the insufficient number of civil registry offices in remote areas and the insufficient awareness of the importance of registration. It also notes with concern that the one-month limit for families to register births increases difficulties and costs for families.

37. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 34), and urges the State party to establish an efficient and accessible birth registration system covering its entire territory, including by empowering chiefs of villages in remote areas to register civil status, so that all children are registered immediately after birth. The Committee also urges the State party to ensure that undue payments are not imposed. It also reiterates its recommendation that the State party:**

(a) Promote awareness and appreciation of the importance of birth registration among parents and administrative authorities through regular mass campaigns providing information on the procedure for birth registration, and on the rights and entitlements derived from the registration;

(b) Take appropriate measures to register those who were not registered at birth, including indigenous children and refugee children;

(c) Seek technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), among others, for the implementation of these recommendations.

Access to appropriate information

38. While welcoming the information on library and reading projects, the Committee regrets the absence of a comprehensive policy on the promotion of children's access to adequate information. The Committee notes with interest that the Ministry of Social Affairs launched a study on children's access to video clubs and its effects on the development and well-being of the child, but regrets the considerable delays in completing the study owing to a lack of funding.

39. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 36) to develop a comprehensive policy on the promotion of children's access to adequate information and to ensure that children are protected from harmful material, including that which can be found on the Internet. It calls on the State party to adequately fund studies aimed at better understanding children's access to information and material, including in video clubs, and the effects of the video clubs on the development and well-being of the child. The Committee reiterates that the State party should also ensure that all children in the State party have access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources that are age-appropriate and respectful of the child's spiritual and moral well-being.**

D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39 of the Convention)

Corporal punishment

40. While welcoming the prohibition of corporal punishment to discipline a child, as provided in Law 4-2010 on the protection of the child, the Committee remains concerned that children still suffer violent corporal punishment at home and at school.

41. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 38), and calls on the State party to:**

(a) Ensure the full implementation of Law No. 4-2010, which prohibits corporal punishment, and ensure that all cases of corporal punishment are effectively investigated and prosecuted;

(b) Continue to raise awareness among the general public, including children, about the unlawfulness of corporal punishment and other forms of violence, and the negative consequences thereof on the development and well-being of the child;

(c) Promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment;

(d) Provide children with child-sensitive mechanisms for lodging complaints in the event they are victims of violence, including corporal punishment.

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

42. The Committee notes with appreciation that Law No. 4-2010 on the protection of the child explicitly prohibits and sanctions torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. While noting current efforts to refit penitentiary centres to meet international standards, the Committee is concerned about the lack of information on the allegations of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including rape, of children in detention by the military and the police (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 40). The Committee is also concerned by the absence of a child-sensitive mechanism to receive complaints against law enforcement officers.

43. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 41), and calls on the State party to take effective measures to protect children from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. It urges the State party to:**

(a) Investigate all reported cases and prosecute military personnel, law enforcement officials or any person acting in an official capacity responsible for such acts and ensure that perpetrators are provided with penalties commensurate to their crimes;

(b) Ensure that all child victims of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment are provided with access to physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration, as well as compensation, giving due consideration to the obligations enshrined in articles 38 and 39 of the Convention;

(c) Establish a child-sensitive mechanism to receive complaints from children who may have been victims of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by law enforcement officials;

(d) Systematically train police officers, prison staff and other authorities on the human rights of children.

Abuse and neglect

44. The Committee notes the ongoing preparation of a draft law on sexual violence. Nevertheless, it expresses its concern about the widespread violence against children, in particular girls, and that, according to the State party's own evaluation, perpetrators of child abuse and neglect enjoy a high degree of impunity. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of information on measures, mechanisms and resources for preventing and combating domestic violence, abuse of children at school and neglect of children, as well as on the institution in charge of providing support and recovery services to child victims.

45. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Expedite the adoption of the draft law on sexual violence and ensure that the national legal framework for the protection of the child is systematically applied and that perpetrators of violence against children are brought to justice;

(b) Further strengthen awareness-raising and public education programmes, including campaigns, with the involvement of children, in order to formulate a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combating child abuse;

(c) Designate a national institution to implement long-term programmes for addressing the root causes of violence and abuse, and ensure that it receives adequate human, technical and financial resources;

(d) Establish a national database on all cases of domestic violence against, and abuse and neglect of children, and undertake a comprehensive assessment of the extent, causes and nature of such violence;

(e) Encourage community-based programmes aimed at preventing and tackling domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, including by involving former victims, volunteers and community members and providing them with training support.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

46. The Committee remains gravely concerned that:

(a) Exploitation of and sexual violence affecting children, and in particular girls under 13 years of age, persist;

(b) Cases of exploitation and sexual violence are not systematically investigated and perpetrators are not prosecuted;

(c) Assistance for victims is not available everywhere in the State party.

47. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 82) and, in particular, calls on the State party to:**

(a) Take effective measures to enforce domestic laws that protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation, including the provision of intensive training on those laws to police personnel, members of the judiciary and professionals working with and for children;

(b) Investigate cases of abuse, prosecute such crimes and impose adequate sentences;

(c) Ensure the development of programmes and policies for the prevention, recovery and social reintegration of child victims, in accordance with the outcome documents adopted at the 1996, 2001 and 2008 World Congresses against Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm, Yokohama and Rio de Janeiro, respectively.

Freedom of the child from all forms of violence

48. The Committee is concerned that, despite the adoption of a national gender policy and plan of action:

(a) Violence against women and children has increased in the past 10 years;

(b) There is no comprehensive national strategy to prevent and address all forms of violence against children;

(c) The State budget allocated to recovery and reintegration programmes for children in situations of vulnerability, including victims of violence (2006–2010), is highly insufficient;

(d) Children in situations of vulnerability, such as indigenous children, children with albinism, children with disabilities, children living and working in the streets, and children living in poverty or from rural areas, are more at risk of violence than others.

49. **Recalling the recommendations of the 2006 United Nations study on violence against children (see A/61/299), the Committee urges the State party to prioritize the elimination of all forms of violence against children. Drawing the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Develop a comprehensive national strategy to prevent and address all forms of violence against children;

(b) Adopt a national coordinating framework to address all forms of violence against children;

(c) Implement the national gender policy and plan of action and pay particular attention to and address the gender dimension of violence;

(d) Cooperate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and other relevant United Nations institutions;

(e) Ensure an adequate allocation of resources for the implementation of policies and programmes for the prevention of violence against children and for the recovery and reintegration of child victims.

E. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18 (1 and 2), 20–21, 25 and 27 (4) of the Convention)

Family environment

50. The Committee is concerned about the unequal parental responsibilities of the mother and the father, ingrained in law and in practice. The Committee remains concerned about the delays on the part of the State party in repealing legal provisions not in accordance with the Convention and which discriminate against women and girls. It reiterates its concern that insufficient measures have been taken to change the prevalent gender stereotypes concerning the roles of women and girls, especially in the family. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that social and other family support services in general are inadequate.

51. **The Committee urges the State party to accelerate its efforts to revise the Family Code and ensure that all provisions that discriminate against women and that have a negative impact on their children are repealed. In particular, it calls on the State party to ensure that the Family Code provision that recognizes the father as the head of the family is repealed, and that mothers and fathers equally share the legal responsibility for their children, in accordance with article 18, paragraph 1, of the Convention. The Committee also recommends that the State party provide families with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their obligation towards their children and to ensure their well-being and development.**

Children deprived of a family environment

52. While noting the establishment of regulations and norms relating to private foster care structures and child shelters, the Committee expresses concern that unofficial family placement of children is carried out without State registration or supervision. It is further concerned at the lack of information on children in care institutions, on periodic review of placements by the authorities, and on the availability of alternative child care options. While welcoming Law No. 10-2012, by which the State party instituted the regime for families and children facing difficulties, the Committee notes with concern the continuing abandonment of children by parents, mainly for economic reasons.

53. **Recalling the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex), the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) Ensure that all care institutions and children's shelters are adequately registered and conform to existing norms and standards of practice for the protection and well-being of children deprived of a family environment;

(b) Increase alternative family-based care options for children currently in children's shelters and care institutions, with a view to abolishing the use of institutions for the care of children deprived of a family environment;

(c) Provide minimum standards and professional protocols for the establishment and operation of alternative services;

(d) Thoroughly and periodically placements of children in institutions and, where it is in the best interests of the child, to ensure and encourage ongoing

relationships between the child and her or his biological family, and support reunification;

(e) Establish a comprehensive and clear policy on, and a structure of, family support with a view to increasing the provision of universal basic preventive and early intervention services to address the out-of-family placement of children, the situation of children working in the streets, and the abandonment of children by parents solely for economic reasons;

(f) Increase the number of social workers and assistants, as well as their opportunities for high-quality training and on-the-job support.

Adoption

54. While noting that the State party envisages developing an adoption policy and ratifying the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, the Committee reiterates its concern about the absence of a central control mechanism and of procedures regarding domestic and intercountry adoptions. The Committee also expresses its concern at the lack of information about the "informal adoption" of children cared for by their extended families, including of children who are AIDS orphans, which is widely practised but not monitored.

55. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 49) in full, and calls on the State party to:**

(a) Ensure the compliance of legislation and administrative procedures on adoption with article 21 of the Convention;

(b) Establish a comprehensive national policy and guidelines governing adoption and a central control mechanism to ensure that domestic and intercountry adoptions are performed in full compliance with the best interests of the child and the appropriate legal guarantees in accordance with the Convention;

(c) Expedite the ratification and implementation of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

F. Disability, basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (1–3) and 33 of the Convention)

Children with disabilities

56. The Committee notes with interest the National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities (2009) and the strategic framework on schooling and re-schooling of children with disabilities (2007), but is concerned at their slow implementation. It also notes with concern that, despite the existence of Law No. 9/92 (1992) on the promotion and protection of disabled persons, no application decrees have been finalized. It also expresses concern that many children with disabilities, especially in rural areas, remain at home and receive no schooling owing to the lack of practical measures to ensure that the national education system has the necessary capacities to facilitate their access to and to integrate them into the education system.

57. **In the light of article 23 of the Convention and of the Committee's general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee urges the State party to adopt a human rights-based approach to disability, reiterates its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 57), and recommends that the State party:**

(a) Implement the existing national plan of action and strategic framework through dissemination and by ensuring adequate resources;

(b) Finalize decrees for the implementation of Law No. 9/92;

(c) Take practical measures to encourage the inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream educational system and in society;

(d) Strengthen special training for teachers and make the physical environment, including schools and all other public areas, accessible for children with disabilities;

(e) Improve and strengthen early detection and treatment services in the health and education sectors.

Health and health services

58. The Committee welcomes the strategies adopted by the State party to reduce the high maternal and child mortality, to manage childhood illness, to improve the treatment of malnutrition and to reduce malaria. The Committee also notes with appreciation the role of civil society organizations and the media in the national strategy for empowering households and communities for the promotion of good nutritional and health practices. Nevertheless, the Committee expresses its concern that there are a number of constraints on the implementation of those strategies and that preventable and treatable diseases, including diarrhoea, continue to be among the main causes of infant and child mortality. The Committee is also concerned at the limited geographical coverage of health services, the insufficient number of socio-health facilities and staff, and insufficient supplies of medicine.

59. **The Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. Recalling its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 59), the Committee urges the State party to overcome the constraints preventing the implementation of existing strategies by, inter alia:**

(a) Ensuring the provision of primary health-care services for all pregnant women and children, focusing on the development of accessible health-care services with trained health-care providers and on interventions to reduce preventable and other diseases, particularly diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and undernutrition. Health-care services should include access to sanitation and clean drinking water;

(b) Strengthening and expanding access to preventive health care and therapeutic services for all pregnant women and children, particularly infants and children under the age of 5. They should include universal immunization services, oral rehydration therapy, treatment for acute respiratory infections, the promotion of infant and young child feeding practices, particularly breastfeeding and giving infants food based on local foods, and the prevention of malaria through the use of impregnated bed nets. In addition, the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes should be implemented effectively and a monitoring system put in place to ensure the enforcement of regulations;

(c) Increasing efforts to implement the strategies aimed at reducing maternal mortality throughout the country, including for trained care at home and in maternal and child health clinics, and for emergency obstetric care;

(d) Reviewing existing policies and practices, and ensuring that health care is provided free of charge and without discrimination or unequal treatment to all

children, especially indigenous children and children of families unable to afford the payment fees;

(e) Continuing the dissemination of health information and the promotion of health education, particularly on the use of latrines and hand washing, among all segments of society, and providing safe water to all segments of society;

(f) Increasing the quality and coverage of training provided to staff at socio-health units and ensuring that those units are adequately staffed and have the essential facilities and supplies, including obstetric supplies and emergency medicines for children and pregnant women;

(g). Increasing the participation of indigenous communities in the development of health policy and the delivery of services, and seeking financial and technical assistance from UNICEF and the World Health Organization, among others, in that regard.

HIV/AIDS

60. The Committee notes with appreciation the multisectoral institutional framework adopted by the State party to address the impact of HIV/AIDS on children and to eliminate HIV transmission from mother to child, and the increased access to HIV/AIDS care services provided for in Decree No. 2008-128 establishing free access to treatments for people living with HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned at the absence of information about a national HIV/AIDS prevention strategy among adolescents as well as the lack of a national strategy with regard to adolescents living with HIV/AIDS. The Committee is also concerned that:

(a) HIV/AIDS is one of the main causes of death, leaving thousands of orphaned children who may be infected;

(b) Some mothers and children may not have been tested to determine their HIV status;

(c) Some HIV-infected children do not receive proper medical and psychological care;

(d) Access to and the use of condoms by adolescents and young people is low, reflecting insufficient awareness of, among other things, the consequences of unprotected sexual activity;

(e) The Ligne Jaune helpline for free HIV/AIDS information and advice is not available throughout the State party.

61. **In the light of its general comment No. 3 (2003) on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child, the Committee recommends that the State party develop a road map to ensure the implementation of effective HIV/AIDS preventive measures, including focused interventions in regard to adolescents. It calls on the State party to:**

(a) Sustain the measures in place to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. Moreover, the State party should scale up appropriate education and care services;

(b) Improve follow-up treatment for HIV/AIDS-infected mothers and their infants to ensure early diagnosis and the immediate initiation of treatment;

(c) Improve access to high-quality, age-appropriate HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health services, particularly for adolescents;

(d) Achieve national coverage for the Ligne Jaune helpline;

(e) Seek technical assistance from, inter alia, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and UNICEF.

Harmful practices

62. The Committee remains concerned that female genital mutilation is still practised among some West African communities living in the State party. The Committee also expresses its concern that child and forced marriages continue to be practised in the State party.

63. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 65) that the State party adopt legislation to prohibit such harmful practices and take well-targeted measures to ensure the eradication of female genital mutilation in all communities living on its territory, including through widespread awareness-raising campaigns, and also recommends that the State party criminalize female genital mutilation. It calls on the State party to encourage children to report those practices to health professionals and competent authorities. The Committee also recommends that the State party take active and practical measures to enforce the legal prohibition of child and forced marriage.**

Standard of living

64. The Committee recognizes the challenge posed by poverty in the State party. While noting with interest the adoption of the National Development Plan (2012–2016), the Committee is concerned about the high levels of deprivation with regard to access to water and sanitation, education, health services and housing which affect children the most, especially children living in poverty.

65. **The Committee urges the State party to implement its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 67) and take adequate measures to reduce poverty and deprivation levels so that children in the State party can enjoy an adequate standard of living, in particular with respect to access to safe drinking water and sanitation, housing and education. It encourages the State party to develop universal, long-term public policies in those areas, moving away from project-based initiatives, and calls on the State party to:**

(a) Guarantee access to health services and schools, free of charge, for all children;

(b) Hold targeted consultations with families, children and children's rights civil society organizations on the issue of child poverty, with a view to strengthening the strategies and measures for fulfilling children's rights in the National Development Plan.

G. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29, 30 and 31 of the Convention)

Education, including vocational training and guidance

66. The Committee welcomes ministerial order No. 278/MEFB/METP/MEPSA putting into effect the constitutional provisions on free primary and secondary education, and notes the national plan and the strategy for education. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned about the absence of information regarding any evaluation of the implementation and impact of those measures. The Committee remains concerned that:

(a) Parents continue to have to pay registration fees for examinations, fees for lesson notes from some teachers and other unofficial charges;

(b) Vulnerable groups of children continue to face difficulties in enjoying access to education, in particular indigenous and poor children, girls and children with disabilities;

(c) No information was provided on holistic early childhood development for all children in the State party;

(d) The quality of education is low, primary school dropout rates are high and vocational training for children, in particular those who drop out of school, is lacking;

(e) Schools for indigenous children set up with support from religious and international groups as a response to the discrimination faced by indigenous children at school are not yet part of the public system and, as they are dependent on external funding, are unsustainable in the long run;

(f) There are disparities in terms of access, affecting in particular children in remote and poor areas, and reflected in shortages of teachers and the low level of teachers' skills and knowledge, as well as in poor facilities.

67. **Taking into account its general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Guarantee the right to free mandatory education, without direct or hidden costs; take the necessary measures to ensure that all children are enrolled in school; and improve accessibility to education, paying particular attention to disparities in access to schools based on sex and socioeconomic, ethnic and regional grounds;

(b) Adopt a holistic early childhood development strategy and invest in the training of early childhood development teachers and the provision of integrated formal and community-based programmes involving parents and covering health care, nutrition and breastfeeding, early stimulation and early learning for children from birth to the first year of school;

(c) Undertake additional efforts to improve the quality of education and training for teachers, and develop and promote high-quality informal education and vocational training to enhance the skills of children and young people, especially those who drop out of school;

(d) Provide additional school facilities, particularly in rural areas, and incorporate schools for indigenous children into the national budget, to increase access to education for all children;

(e) Review and update school curricula at all levels with a view to incorporating human rights education with a focus on child rights, as well as peace education.

Rest, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities

68. The Committee notes the promotion of reading and access to culture in the capital city and main departments, but reiterates its concern about the limited opportunities available for children throughout the country to engage in cultural and recreational activities and programmes (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 71). It also notes with concern the lack of playgrounds and sport grounds for children throughout the country.

69. **The Committee draws the State party's attention to its general comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, and reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 72) that the State party undertake measures to increase children's access to, and**

improve the quality of, play and sports facilities, and cultural, leisure and other educational and recreational activities.

H. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32–33, 35–36, 37 (b)–(d), 38, 39 and 40 of the Convention)

Asylum-seeking and refugee children

70. While noting with interest the Refugee Bill, the Committee is concerned that the current lack of a comprehensive refugee and asylum law affects children in particular, as children often experience difficulties in gaining access to the asylum system or are negatively affected by long delays in the processing of their claims. The Committee commends the cooperative approach of the State party towards refugees, including many children; however, it is concerned about:

(a) The hardship of refugees and asylum seekers' living conditions, especially those of refugee and asylum-seeking children;

(b) Incidents of sexual and gender-based abuse and degrading treatment of children, mostly girls;

(c) High school dropout rates among refugee children, in particular girls.

71. **The Committee calls on the State party to finalize and adopt the Refugee Bill with a view to ensuring a child rights-based approach to asylum and the determination of refugee status. It encourages the State party to subsequently take all necessary measures to guarantee the full implementation of the national law, in line with international human rights and refugee law, and refers the State party to its general comment No. 6 (2005) on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin. The Committee urges the State party to protect children, especially girls, against sexual abuse and other related incidents, to investigate cases of abuse fully and to prosecute and sentence the perpetrators of such crimes. It recommends that the State party take all the necessary measures to improve the living conditions of asylum-seeking and refugee children. It also encourages the State party to ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.**

Children belonging to minority or indigenous groups

72. While welcoming Law No. 5-2011 on the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples, the Committee is concerned that its implementing decree has not been finalized and that the law remains widely unknown. The Committee also welcomes the introduction of the principle of affirmative measures for indigenous peoples and the relevant national plan of action for the period 2009–2013, but reiterates its concern about the situation of indigenous children, the de facto discrimination that they face and the absence of information on the implementation of any affirmative measures. The Committee is concerned that indigenous children continue to experience exclusion, violence and discriminatory practices in accessing their rights, including their rights to birth registration, education, access to justice and a life free from labour exploitation. The Committee also notes with concern that indigenous girls are at greater risk of abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

73. **The Committee urges the State party to implement its previous recommendation (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 89) and:**

(a) Take measures to widely disseminate Law No. 5-2011, adopt its implementing decree, and ensure that the law is effectively applied;

(b) Seek technical cooperation from, among others, OHCHR, other United Nations agencies and development partners to develop and undertake a comprehensive national sensitization campaign, aimed at Congolese society as a whole, to address deep-rooted discrimination;

(c) Strengthen efforts to secure the physical integrity of indigenous children;

(d) Implement affirmative measures and develop a new national plan of action to ensure that indigenous children gain de facto enjoyment of their rights, in particular in the areas of birth registration, health and education;

(e) Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 11 (2009) on indigenous children and their rights under the Convention.

Economic exploitation, including child labour

74. The Committee is concerned that, despite the existence of legal instruments prohibiting child labour, particularly in its worst forms, the law enforcement mechanisms are rarely implemented. The Committee notes with regret that a comprehensive plan of action to prevent and combat child labour has not yet been developed (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 80) and that child labour and economic exploitation are widespread occurrences in the State party, especially in large cities. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the implementation of the Committee's previous recommendations (ibid.). The Committee is also extremely concerned that some forms of slavery and trafficking persist and affect mainly indigenous children.

75. **The Committee urges the State party to take immediate and effective measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, and recommends that it:**

(a) Implement existing legal instruments to eliminate child labour;

(b) Carry out a survey to determine the extent of the problem, root causes and patterns of labour and, on the basis of the results, adopt and implement a comprehensive plan of action to prevent and combat child labour;

(c) Take all the necessary measures to eradicate slavery and trafficking within the State party;

(d) Consider ratifying International Labour Organization Convention No. 189 (2011) concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers;

(e) Continue to seek technical assistance from the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Organization in this regard.

Children in street situations

76. The Committee is concerned about the situation of children working and living on the street in major urban centres. The Committee notes with concern the lack of data on those children and the fact that many of them have limited enjoyment of their rights and are susceptible to abuse.

77. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Undertake a comprehensive study to assess the situation of children in street situations and its causes;

(b) Develop a national strategy aimed at preventing children from living and/or working in the streets, as well as at supporting children in street situations and ensuring that children in street situations are provided with a suitable programme of

assistance, and with adequate nutrition, clothing, housing, health care and educational opportunities, including vocational and life-skills training, in order to support their full development;

(c) Take measures to eradicate discrimination against children in street situations;

(d) Develop a national strategy aimed at preventing situations in which children resort to living and working on the street.

Sale, trafficking and abduction

78. The Committee notes with interest the draft law on human trafficking and the 2012–2015 plan of action for combating human trafficking, but reiterates its concern over the absence of a law against trafficking (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 83) and a national programme of action to eliminate child trafficking. While it welcomes the local plan of action against trafficking in Pointe-Noire, the Committee notes with concern the persistence of cross-border trafficking of children for forced labour and sexual exploitation and internal "fostering", as well as international adoption not in compliance with international standards. It is also concerned at the insufficiency of the information provided by the State party on the assistance and reintegration services available to child victims of trafficking. The Committee also expresses its concern over allegations of the complicity of some authorities in activities related to trafficking and the fact that the number of successful prosecutions remains low. It notes with concern that the State party has not yet ratified anti-trafficking instruments, namely, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the multilateral cooperation agreement to combat trafficking in persons in West and Central Africa (the Abuja Agreement).

79. **The Committee encourages the State party to adopt the draft law on human trafficking and its implementation guidelines and to designate a national committee for combating the trafficking of children, as envisaged in the draft law, and provide it with adequate resources. It urges the State party to further strengthen its efforts to identify, prevent and combat trafficking in children for sexual and other exploitative purposes, and specifically to:**

(a) Tackle the root causes and improve the situation of children at risk, especially girls, through the economic reintegration and the rehabilitation of victims;

(b) Strengthen mechanisms to prevent and monitor human trafficking and the exploitation of children, including at the local level, and, at the same time, to undertake preventive action to improve living conditions and economic opportunities, in particular in high-risk border zones, paying particular attention to economically disadvantaged families;

(c) Strengthen training programmes for law enforcement officers and border guards, as well as public awareness-raising programmes targeting, in particular, children, parents and other caregivers, and to sensitize officials working with and for victims of trafficking;

(d) Continue to pursue efforts for transnational collaboration on combating the trafficking of children and for the establishment and implementation of agreements between neighbouring countries;

(e) Provide, in partnership with stakeholders, adequate programmes of assistance, psychosocial rehabilitation and social reintegration for sexually exploited and/or trafficked children;

(f) Ensure the investigation, prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of child trafficking, in accordance with national legislation;

(g) Consider ratifying all international instruments relating to the combating of human trafficking.

Administration of juvenile justice

80. The Committee welcomes the information concerning improvements to the juvenile observation centre and its decree of remit and functioning, the availability of children's judges and the recent use of daytime sociocultural reintegration centres for some children in detention. Nevertheless, the Committee reiterates its concern that children's judges are not always available and that children are placed in detention with adults (CRC/C/COG/CO/1, para. 86), often in very difficult conditions. It is also concerned that children face difficulties in gaining access to legal aid. While noting that the State party envisages revising its Code of Criminal Procedure, the Committee expresses concern that:

(a) There is no minimum age of criminal responsibility, and that judges decide on a case-by-case basis whether a child incurs a criminal penalty or not;

(b) The detention of children in conflict with the law, even of young children, is preferred over the development of alternative measures;

(c) Statistical data on the number and characteristics of children currently in prison are not available.

81. **The Committee urges the State party to bring its juvenile justice system fully into line with the Convention, in particular articles 37, 39 and 40, and with other relevant standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines), the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (the Havana Rules), the Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System and the Committee's general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice. In particular, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) Expeditiously reform its Code of Criminal Procedure, establishing an internationally accepted minimum age of criminal responsibility;

(b) Establish specialized juvenile court facilities and procedures with adequate human, technical and financial resources, and ensure that specialized judges for children are available throughout the State party and that all public officers dealing with juvenile justice receive appropriate education and training and are aware of the Convention and Law No. 4–2010 on the protection of the child;

(c) Ensure the provision of qualified and impartial legal aid to children in conflict with the law at an early stage of the procedure and throughout the legal proceedings;

(d) Promote alternative measures to detention, such as diversion, probation, mediation, counselling or community service, wherever possible, and ensure that detention is used as a last resort and for the shortest possible time and that it is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to ending it;

(e) In cases where detention is unavoidable, ensure that children are not detained together with adults and that detention conditions are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health services.

82. **To that effect, the Committee recommends that the State party make use of the technical assistance tools developed by the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice and its members, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNICEF, OHCHR and NGOs, and seek technical assistance in the area of juvenile justice from members of the Panel.**

I. Ratification of international human rights instruments

83. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, ratify the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, namely the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.**

84. **The Committee urges the State party to fulfil its reporting obligations under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the reports on which are both overdue.**

J. Cooperation with regional and international bodies

85. **The Committee recommends that the State party cooperate with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of the African Union towards the implementation of the Convention and other human rights instruments, both in the State party and in other African Union member States.**

K. Follow-up and dissemination

86. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the present recommendations are fully implemented by, inter alia, transmitting them to the President, Parliament, relevant ministries, the Supreme Court and local authorities for appropriate consideration and further action.**

87. **The Committee also recommends that the combined second to fourth periodic report, the written replies of the State party and the related recommendations (concluding observations) of the Committee be made widely available in the languages of the country, including, but not exclusively, through the Internet, to the public at large, civil society organizations, the media, youth groups, professional groups and children, in order to generate debate on and awareness of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto, and their implementation and monitoring.**

L. Next report

88. **The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined fifth and sixth periodic report by 12 November 2019 and to include in it information on the follow-up to the present concluding observations. The Committee draws attention to its harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines adopted on 1 October 2010 (CRC/C/58/Rev.2 and Corr.1) and reminds the State party that future reports should be in compliance with the guidelines and not exceed 60 pages. The Committee urges the State party to submit its report in accordance with the guidelines. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/167 of 20 December 2012, in the event that a report exceeding the page limitations is submitted, the State party will be asked to review and resubmit the report in accordance with the above-mentioned guidelines. The Committee reminds the State party that if it is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation of the report for the purposes of its consideration by the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.**

89. **The Committee also invites the State party to submit an updated core document in accordance with the requirements for the common core document in the harmonized guidelines on reporting, approved at the fifth inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies in June 2006 (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).**